

Tomorrow Secretary of State George Shultz arrives in Jerusalem, bearing the gift of Moscow's agreement to expand emigration for Soviet Jews. A great victory for human rights!

The irony cannot be lost. This further chipping away at Moscow's "evil empire" image, accompanied by a diminishment in South Africa's repressions, leaves Israel, in the world's eyes, as today's principal agent for human suffering.

Not since Stalinist days have human rights been under such assault in the Soviet Union. South Africa has yet to sustain a comparably extended campaign. But then, apartheid foes have never shown the sustained willingness, as the Palestinians, to accept mutilation and death.

Since December, thousands of men, women and children have been beaten systematically by occupation forces. Hundreds more have suffered gunshot wounds. Over 60 Arabs have been killed, including 10- and 12-year-old boys.

No one has recorded the number of post-midnight raids on sleeping families in their homes, the hospital patients pulled or driven from their beds, and the men and women, of all ages, tossed into jails. Due process has no meaning for Arabs in today's Israel.

Under the circumstances, it would seem fair for Mr. Shultz to request that, in exchange for U.S. efforts to receive broadened emigration from Moscow, Jerusalem grant full civil rights to Israel's 750,000 Arabs and assurances of protection for the person and properties of 1.5 million Palestinians in the occupied territories.

At the same time, Secretary Shultz might, with justice, insist that Israel pull back from Lebanon; it continues to control a wide swath of that country, south of the Litani River.

Marine Lt. Col. William Higgins was taken hostage last week inside this so-called "security zone." He commanded a United Nations observer force whose presence was demanded by Jerusalem, as a condition for pulling back its "regular" army from Lebanon after the 1982 invasion, now considered Israel's "Vietnam" by many of its citizens.

Col. Higgins' fate can be expected to figure in Mr. Bush's Middle East talks this week, but not Israeli continuing control over a large slice of Lebanon. In fact, I can recall no significant U.S. protest over the security zone. Washington has opposed all attempts within the United Nations to return the territory to Beirut.

Furthermore, at this stage, there is no sign that Jerusalem is willing to entertain any suggestions that it make any changes of substance in its present policies and actions, in any area, in any way.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir rejects all suggestions by insisting that

"Israel is no banana republic." Of course, he's right.

The United States never in its history poured billions annually, for decades, into any other nation. In addition to this year's \$4 billion-plus in government aid, U.S. citizens provide hundreds of millions to prop up Jerusalem's programs. In fact, Israel's economy would collapse without American subsidies.

But Mr. Shamir's "banana republic" taunt was based on another fact of America's history. Never before has any foreign power exerted such influence in the corridors of Washington power. Israel consistently commands controlling allegiances in the Congress. That influence appears unshaken, despite the staggering revelations of Jerusalem's seeming disregard for human rights in the occupied territories. This is the biggest brake on Mr. Shultz as he attempts to re-establish an American presence in the Middle East.

As a result, the secretary must constantly look over his shoulder, back to Capitol Hill, as he makes the latest round of shuttle diplomacy. In the Middle East, nations have learned that, whatever American intentions, Israel holds the last word over U.S. actions.

In truth, as this week's Soviet talks showed, Washington has more success in dealing with arch-enemy Moscow than in winning concessions from its "very special" friend Jerusalem, even when human rights are at stake.

For their part, the Palestinians plan to greet Mr. Shultz with massive demonstrations. It takes no prophet to foretell that more will die, if not in the next few days, then in the weeks and months ahead, as they have for the past 20 years. The difference now lies in the fact that they have finally gained the world's attention.

Significantly, Palestinians have dealt themselves a role in Israel's 40th anniversary celebration of its modern existence. Already, their uprising has caused a 22 percent drop in anticipated reservations from abroad for the ceremonies due to pick up full steam in late April. Here exists the possibility of real pressure on Jerusalem. Aside from depriving Israel of important revenues, continuing demonstrations will result in devastating loss of face for the Likud-Labor coalition government.

If Anwar Sadat was right, and the key to peace in the Middle East lies in justice for the Palestinians, then "the children of the stones," as the Arabs call the demonstrators, may yet wind up gaining what PLO bombs and guns never could, a home for the homeless people of the camps. And that would be another victory for human rights!

This much is certain. There can be no peace in the Middle East as long as any people are deprived of their dignity as human beings.

Roy Meachum

Human rights

